

Situation analysis of students' welfare services in universities in South-Western Nigeria: Implications for students' personnel management practice

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Abstract: Motivating learners in university depends largely on those services, processes and procedures whose primary purpose is to enhance and maintain learners' physical, social, intellectual and emotional well-being. This study examined the situation of welfare services in the context of university education vis-à-vis students' perceived motivation to learning. The study involved public universities in South-Western Nigeria with different characteristics, such as curriculum focus, year of establishment, ownership and residential statuses. Using a descriptive survey research design, the target population for the study was the final-year undergraduate students drawn from three faculties and a college using multi-stage, stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The SWESAQ (students' welfare service assessment questionnaire) instrument was administered on 800 students that constituted the sample frame. The major findings among others were that provision of welfare services in all universities was inadequate and seemed to be responsible for learners' low level of satisfaction and poor motivation to learning. Consequently, the implications of these findings for students' personnel management practice were discussed and necessary suggestions were given.

Key words: welfare services; universities; Nigeria; students' personnel management

1. Introduction

The university, as the apex of the educational system and the highest level of human capital development, has bonds of loyalty not only to the country which supports it, but also to the international companies of universities all over the world. Within the educational setting, wherever a discussion is thrown open on human resources management, the learners tend to form the central/focus point. This is because the learners, as identified by Maduewesi (2005), remain the most precious resources, not for use, but for moulding. They are looking for models outside their parents to copy. Much like the school system is a person-processing organization, those institutions where they learn and those who take care of the students should be concerned with their entire welfare. Several issues have resulted in a lot of controversies at several academic for over the effectiveness of Nigeria learners in the universities relative to their counterparts in the developed world, with particular focus on their welfare.

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Welfare issues in the context of university education are those services, processes and procedures whose primary purpose is to motivate, maintain and enhance the physical, social, intellectual and emotional well-being of students. The administration of these welfare programmes in the tertiary institutions, particularly universities, border on the number of persons and activities that are administered through a number of governmental programmes and universities governing policies co-ordinated by the Student Affairs Unit. Welfare provision within the school setting can be divided into support services (people you can turn to for help), and the Personnel Development Programme which is designed to help students devise effective coping strategies for what can be a very high pressure course and career.

Subair (2008) conceptualized student welfare service as one of the wide range of services put in place by school authority, to ensure sound learning of students in the campus. He further identified accommodation, counselling, career information, support from tutor, course information, student unionism, bursary award/scholarship, degree marketability and transportation as the basic welfare services that would serve the entire students populace in any higher institution of learning.

Individuals are very much more than a merely productive factor in management plans. They are consumers of goods and services and thus, they vitally influence demand. Individual learners can be helped to satisfy their own needs and utilize their potentials and at the same time contribute to the aims of an enterprise. Institutions of learning should thus have an understanding of the roles assumed by learners, the individuality and the personalities of learners. It is equally important to acknowledge that individuals are unique. They have different needs, ambitious, attitudes and desires for responsibility, different levels of knowledge and skills and different potentials. Achieving results is important, but the means of it must never violate the dignity of learners. This concept implies that learners must be treated with respect, no matter what their positions.

Some of these welfare services constitute primary needs, such as the physiological requirements for water and shelter. Others constitute secondary needs, such as counselling, career information, support from tutors, bursary, and so on, including students' unionism, these needs all meant to enable every student to develop self-esteem, status, affiliation, with others, affection, giving, accomplishment and self-assertion.

2. Statement of the problem

It is sufficient to say that the early formative years of the first generation universities were a period characterized by the buzzing excitement of academic enterprise. The elitist flavour was palatable, with common rooms, bed-sitting rooms, hall masters and wardens, black bow ties at all dinners and the high table, to mention only a few. This is in contrast to what obtains today in the universities. The question is: What is the situation of welfare services in the universities? How have they affected students? What are the implications of these (welfare services) to student personnel management practices? It is against this background that the study examines the state of welfare services in universities in South-Western Nigeria.

3. Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for this study were that:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between welfare services and students' perceived motivation to learning;

Ho₂: There is no difference among students in their level of satisfaction with the available services in the universities.

4. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised all final-year undergraduates in the public universities in South-Western Nigeria, their selection was based on geographical spread and location, ownership status, year of establishment and curriculum focus. The students sample was drawn from 3 faculties and a college. These are faculties of education, science and engineering and college of medicine. Fifty final-year students were selected from each faculty and college, hence, a total of 200 final-year students comprised the final sample for the study. The multi-stage, stratified and random sampling techniques were used to select the students' sample. A research instrument tagged the SWESAQ, an 87-item questionnaire developed by the researcher to elicit from students' necessary information about the state of welfare services was used. The instrument has 6 parts that covered variables: hostel accommodation, sports/recreation centres, information and counselling centres, health services, security and environment, and others (transportation, bursary awards/scholarships, students' unionism and worship centres), with a check list of welfare services meant to be rated by the respondents.

However, the public universities used were the University of Ado-Ekiti (UNAD), University of Lagos (UNILAG), Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Federal University of Technology (FUTA) and Ladoke-Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), but some faculties/college were not available in some institutions. For example, UNAD has no college of medicine, FUTA has neither faculty of education nor college of medicine, while LAUTECH had no faculty of education at the time of this study.

5. Findings

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between welfare services and students' perceived motivation to learning.

To test this hypothesis, the respondents' responses on sections C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6 and D2 of the questionnaire were computed into mean ($\bar{X}$) and SD (standard deviation). Thereafter, the Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient statistical procedure was used to determine whether the university welfare services have significant relationship with students' perceived motivation to learning. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Relationship between university welfare services and students' perceived motivation to learning

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	df	SD	r-cal	r-critical
Welfare services	800	68.60	798	8.31	0.635*	0.062
Students' perceived motivation to learning		66.73		7.96		

Notes: * Significant; df=798; P<0.05.

Table 1 reveals a comparatively higher mean ($\bar{X}$) scores of 68.60, SD=8.31 for welfare services than the lower mean ($\bar{X}$) of 66.73, SD=7.96 obtained for students' perceived motivation to learning. This means that there exists a statistically significant relationship between welfare services and students' perceived motivation to learning.

The result of the Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient shows that a calculated r-value of 0.635 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.062, given 798 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This result is significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is upheld. This implies that there is a significant relationship between welfare services and students' perceived motivation to learning.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the students' levels of satisfaction with the available infrastructure

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and welfare services in the universities.

To test this hypothesis, students' responses on sections B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5 and C6 were computed and their mean ($\bar{X}$) scores and SD were found. Also, the respondents' scores were used to categorize them into high, moderate and low satisfaction levels.

Thereafter, one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) was used to verify whether the significant difference in students' level of satisfaction with the available infrastructure and welfare services exists. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Students' level of satisfaction with the available infrastructure and welfare services in the universities

Levels of satisfaction	N	$\bar{X}$ -score		SD	
Low	242	45.04		9.26	
Moderate	206	44.06		9.44	
High	352	51.22		7.74	
Sources of variance	Sums of squares	Degrees of freedom	Means of squares	F-ratio	F-critical
Between groups (Levels of satisfaction)	1205.08	2	602.54	38.06*	3.00
Within groups (error)	12614.73	797	15.83		
Total	13819.81	799			

Notes: *Significant; df=2(797); P<0.05.

Table 2 indicates that students with high level of satisfaction exhibited a higher mean ($\bar{X}$) scores of 51.22, SD=7.74, followed by students with low level of satisfaction exhibiting slightly higher mean ($\bar{X}$) scores of 45.04, SD=9.26 than the students with moderate level of satisfaction with the mean ($\bar{X}$) scores of 44.06, SD=9.44.

This shows that there exists statistically significant difference in the students' level of satisfaction with the available infrastructure and welfare services in the universities. The results of the one-way ANOVA indicate that the calculated F-ratio of 38.06 is higher than the critical F-value of 3.00 given 2 and 797 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This result is significant.

Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is a significant difference in the students' level of satisfaction with the available infrastructure and welfare services in the universities. Due to this significant difference, further analysis of data was done to determine the trend of the difference using Fisher's protected t-test where pair-wise comparison of group means ($\bar{X}$) was done. The results of the Fisher's protected t-test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Difference across students' level of satisfaction with the available infrastructure and welfare services in the universities

Variables	Low level of satisfaction (N=242)	Moderate level of satisfaction (N=206)	High level of satisfaction (N=352)
Low level of satisfaction (N=242)	45.04 ^A	3.68*	2.90
Moderate level of satisfaction (N=206)	7.16	44.06	0.07
High level of satisfaction (N=352)	-0.98	6.18	51.22

Notes: *Significant; at 0.05 level of significance; A=Group means ($\bar{X}$) are in the diagonal, differences in group means are below the diagonal, while protected t-values are above the diagonal.

From Table 3, the analysis of the Fisher's protected t-test pair-wise comparison of group means ($\bar{X}$) shows that students with high level of satisfaction significantly enjoy higher satisfaction with the available infrastructure and welfare services in the universities than either those with moderate level of satisfaction (t=3.68, df=556, P<0.05) or those with low level of satisfaction (t=2.90, df=592, P<0.05). However, no significant difference in the

level of satisfaction was found between students with moderate level of satisfaction with the available infrastructure and welfare services and low level satisfaction ($t=0.07$, $df=446$, $P<0.05$).

6. Discussion of findings

On welfare services and students' perceived motivation to learning, analysis of H_{01} shows that a significant relationship between university welfare services and students perceived motivation to learning exists. This can simply be demonstrated by saying that the essence of any institution of learning is to make for a conducive environment where effective learning, thorough understanding and wholesome development of learners can be achieved.

This aspect took into consideration some areas of welfare services such as hostel accommodation, sports and recreation centers, information/counseling centers and health services. Others include security/environment, transportation, bursary awards/scholarships and worship centers.

On hostel accommodation, the analysis revealed that the higher institutions of learning operate off-campus system except for the University of Lagos and Federal University of Technology, where conspicuous hostel accommodation was found for both the undergraduate and postgraduate students. However, the accommodation conditions of universities still require some improvement. This is evident from the way the researcher met these hostel blocks as at the time of this study. For instance, in Federal University of Technology, there were 14 hostel blocks; University of Lagos had about 20 hostel blocks, and UNAD had 4 hostels of 8 blocks, all owned by the institutions and situated within the campus. It was very pathetic to see the conditions of some of these hostels in terms of comfortability. The nature of bed commonly found was iron-bed, single and double bunks with mattresses that were naked and full of bed bugs.

The number of occupants was another issue of concern. Most rooms' sizes ranged from 12 by 12 to 16 by 16 (3.66 sq.m to 4.87 sq.m). In rooms where there were only 4 double bunks which should have been for 8 students, the researcher found as many as the 8 original occupants, with 8-16 squatters, putting the figure at 16-24 students in a room. Most of the hostels lack some basic facilities, such as emergency health unit, good laundry rooms, adequate toilets and kitchen facilities considering the number of students resident there-in. The resultant effect of which is to cook inside the rooms already shocked. It also may be worrisome to see that not enough security was made available in the hostels. Cafeteria services were not available in some institutions where hostels were present, a good example is in FUTA.

In other institutions where there were no hostels, "build and operate system" was embraced. For example, in UNAD, at the time of this study, there were more than 90 privately owned and operated hostels where students pay ₦8,000 (8,000 naira only) to ₦60,000 (60,000 naira only) per bed space. The same system was noticed in OOU, where students pay ₦12,000 (12,000 naira only) to ₦120,000 (120,000 naira only) depending on the taste of the students. Such principle was obtained in LAUTECH and FUTA.

Going by the assertion of Taylor and Winkle quoted by Ayodele (2003), the learning environment should be enriched to stimulate students' wholesome development, and the more a child is comfortable, the more he/she wants to learn. It is, therefore, the researcher's opinion that apart from the emphasis on academic work, universities should be adorned with good hostel facilities that are learner-friendly and challenging as to maintaining one's individuality and physical and mental health and forming relationship with others. This, the researcher assumes, will offer an opportunity to grow to help students become more effective individuals both at personal and at societal levels. Above all, provision of accommodation facilities will not only influence the

students' academic achievement positively, but also make the undergraduates improve to attain the moral, professional, competitive and socio-political values.

On sports and recreation, the findings show that sports/recreation facilities were sufficiently provided for students' use in the various universities studied, with coaches available for almost all games and sports. It was interesting to see that in the 5 institutions facilities like football pitch, handball and volleyball pitches and tennis courts were common; gymnasium could be found in FUTA and UNILAG. In UNILAG, a standard athletics field with good pavilion under which were offices and changing rooms. Others included swimming pool, cricket pitch, hockey field and basketball pitch. In UNAD, it is sad to see that the sports center turned to a toilet ground. However, FUTA sports center was being given a face lift with the construction of a pavilion at the time of this study.

On information and counseling centers, 81.7% of the respondents disagreed that there were functional information centers allocated at different points in the universities under study, while 18.3% agreed. From the researcher's observations, it may be taken that this disagreement is traceable to the respondents' ignorance of the available centers on campus. However, it was observed that some institutions did not have enough trained and qualified counselors. This justifies the need for counseling in the universities. The finding here indicates that the provision of much more written information (e.g., student handbooks) should be welcomed, but individual contact between all students and those who teach them, particularly the cohort adviser, remains integral to the academic experience within the universities. Thus, each undergraduate should have the personal support of a cohort adviser and professional counselors, who will counsel on choice of pathways and options, arrange and in most cases give tutorials, provide pastoral support, and liaise with the institution or authorities on the students' behalf. If this is done, it will serve both academic needs and also enable any information required to be discovered early on and handled within the university counseling networks.

Health is wealth, so says the adage. The well-being of learners in the universities has been a thing of paramount importance to the university officials. This is confirmed with the establishment of health centers in different higher institutions of learning. It is worthy to note that all universities studied had medical centers. However, differences were noticed in the areas of medical personnel, medical attention given to students, admission in serious cases, drugs dispensed, laboratory tests and over-the counter medications. Furthermore, differences were noticed in the areas of operating hours, ambulance services and information in case of epidemics or endemics. These were responsible for the differences noted in the responses of the respondents. It was observed that students were not always given immediate attention when taken to the health centers; the researcher attributed this to the level of seriousness of the reported health cases. It was pathetic to discover that medical personnel were not sufficient at the health centers. Further analysis reveals that the wards for admission in serious cases were nothing to write about. For instance, in FUTA, there were 2 wards with 4 beds each and were meant for the male and female students, while UNAD had just 2 wards with no room for either male or female students. However, the reverse is the case with UNILAG, LAUTECH and OOU, where there were wards for students' admission for even days. No restrictions was noticed, all students were eligible to attend. But, the analysis shows that students did not want to acknowledge that medications have been free. This could be based on the premise that every student was charged to pay medical fees along side with their tuition during registration.

It is important here to state that health services were not given for 24 hours in all universities; example is UNAD, where it is durning 8:00 am-4:00 pm and not available on weekends. Knowing fully well that students stayed around the school environment, where did they run to in cases of emergency? Further observation shows that no university could boast of adequate medical equipment, this is pathetic. This is one of the major reasons the

Ekiti state government had to scrap the UNAD's College of Medicine, apart from the problem of infrastructure.

As regards transportation, the observation shows that students were made to pay a token of ₦10 and ₦40. However, the road network on campus in UNILAG, FUTA and UNAD was good because of the drainage system. LAUTECH and OOU were not too bad but no street light was noticed in OOU permanent site major road. This however may create security threat to students who may want to trek out of campus later in the evening.

On scholarship and bursary awards, analysis shows that institutions like UNILAG, FUTA, OOU and LAUTECH did give recognition to best students in the departments and faculties. Apart from this, UNILAG had a scheme designed to help students to reduce the burden of financing their education (work-study). This work study programme was under the work study unit, a programme that was first of its kind in Nigeria, came at a time when the general economic situation in the country dictated that students must look for ways of augmenting their finances. At this point, the researcher is of the opinion that if all universities can embrace this idea, with increases in the cost of living index and resultant increases in the cost of tertiary education, coupled with limited number and value of scholarships, bursaries and difficulties in obtaining educational loans, students may see more prospects in higher education and make them have access to it without tears. It is sad to have discovered further in the analysis that the values of scholarship and bursaries being given to students in Nigeria universities ranged from ₦2,500 (2,500 naira only) to ₦10,000 (10,000 naira only). Some may involve going through series of aptitude tests before one can become a beneficiary.

On worship centers, it was no doubt that in every institution studied there were several religious congregations holding at different points and classrooms in the faculties apart from the major church and mosque buildings for the Christian and Muslim students respectively. This simply is an indication that apart from emphasis on academic works in the universities, moral and spiritual imperatives are equally recognized.

7. Implications

Arising from the findings are a few theoretical and practical implication for students' effective personnel management practices. Students' personnel managers are expected to think of learners' behavioral changes as being dependent on their levels of cognition in terms of awareness, perception and levels of satisfaction with the available welfare services for their wholesome development. The need for water, electricity, access roads, bursary, and so on, a university system can hardly be over-emphasized. Without these things, it will be very difficult to live a healthy life, not to mention doing one's academic work.

Some concerns are still unattended to. From the findings, the issues of health services and information/counseling were not given for the priority in the scheme of things. What measures are put in place in the early years of university education to filter out learners with emerging special needs? Welfare services are key motivating factors to human success in life, they are also found as essential ingredients upon which the pillars of university education service delivery are founded. Planning for a people calls for adequate knowledge of the characteristics found in the population. Learners are unique individuals who have different needs, ambitious, attitudes and desires for responsibility, different levels of knowledge and skills and different potentials. Therefore, there is need for concerted efforts to be made by such service providers, to get adequately committed to both the ideals and the provision.

In management, information flows for daily operations, as a result, its presentation must take into consideration the differences in learners' cognition and affective and psychological powers, which all determine

the mode of reception and the audience. The much needed publicity on welfare services was absent in the universities. Since the goal of education is to promote optimal function that the amount of opportunities available to the individual learner should be exposed to determine their requests.

The findings in this study revealed that some universities cannot boast of a standard athletics field, not to mention other sporting pitches or fields. The implication of this is that such an institution has failed to consider the need for physical and mental health of the students. Sporting and recreating call for interpersonal relationships. This will reflect the ability to love and be able to sustain affectionate relationship with other persons. Students' personnel managers should therefore be concerned with efforts meant to maintain emotional stability and maturity of character and also the strength to withstand stress inherent in academic rigors.

Given that professional values of students' affairs units in the universities, students with special needs are not disadvantaged by the management but the inadequate funding, since universities will tend to give priority to basic mainstreams provision before resourcing special needs. This notwithstanding, if universities are to improve institutional effectiveness, they must impact on the available welfare services on ground.

8. Recommendations

(1) Basic infrastructure like electricity, pipe-borne water and road network should be improved. The constant erratic power outages in the universities call for immediate attention. It is recommended that each faculty and department (if possible) has alternative source of power supply so that the faculty and/or departmental staff members are not delayed unnecessarily from carrying out their routine administrative and academic works. However, standards should be maintained in the provision so that "disturbing" power generators are not put in circulation.

Good portable water is a necessity. This should not just be provided but periodic test of water should be done to ascertain safety by putting in place "school officials for health care facilities". This will however include developing a plumbing profile and developing a drinking water testing plan. This is to solve earlier detect water problems. Good road network is necessary, too, because of some noticeable signs of erosion. This should be supported with well networked drainage system.

(2) Health care delivery system in the universities should be improved. Drugs should be regularly supplied with enough wards and beds put in place for students' admissions.

(3) On security matters, universities should be concerned about unruly visitors sneaking into the premises and students' hostels (where accommodation facilities are provided). Therefore, universities need to beef-up security to make schools safer. Universities should install cameras possibly on some strategic positions along the streets and outside the schools (at the gates) because of earlier detect crimes. If possible, security corps (task force) may be raised among the students, which will serve as security threat to those students with criminal tendencies.

(4) There should be a regular sanitation exercise and review of school facilities-maintenance planning so as to make the learning environment clean, orderly, safe, hygienic, cost-effective, instructionally supportive and motivating. Creating refuse dump sites within the university premises is uncalled-for.

(5) The physical, social, mental and emotional well-being of learners should be given priority in the scheme of things. Adequate sporting facilities need to be put in place to enhance socialization, sportsmanship and leadership qualities. If possible, some lectures should be set aside to encourage students' participation in sports. This would aid earlier discovery of talented sportsmen and women who can do the institution and the country at large proud.

(6) Bursary award and scholarship should be improved. Considering the economic realities of this present in Nigeria, there is the urgent need to harmonize the current bursary award/scholarship being given to Nigerian university students. Particular attention should be given to students with demonstrated financial problems (indigent students), physically challenged students, outstanding and talented in sports and best students in the departmental and faculty courses.

Moreover, enough publicity should be given to the available welfare services to students coming into the university environment during orientation. These may serve as challenges for aiding their academic performance. Appreciating the "global village" nature of the world now, the need for ICT (information of computer and technology) in the universities can not be over-emphasized. Though, evidence abound that the universities used in this study had something to show for this, but considering the students' population and the e-learning opportunities, there is the need to intensify efforts to ensure adequate provision of these facilities. There is the need for institution to show concern for improving quality of learners' lives which appear to be widespread in the world.

(7) There should be reduction in the number of occupants per room. In universities where there are provisions for accommodation facilities, efforts should be made to reduce the number of occupants per room for health reasons.

Individual institution should encourage partnership with private groups on build, operate and transfer (BOT) basis. However, this should be done with caution to prevent the private groups from exploiting the students. Necessary policies may need to be put in place with stringent disciplinary measures to reduce the number of inmates in the hostels.

(8) A disciplined and virile student representation should be encouraged at all levels. This makes the students' voices heard and attended to, thereby making learners motivated through inclusion and consultation. Learners are stakeholders in any educational system and at the same time they constitute a crucial input in that they are the "raw materials" which school processes are intended to transform. The effectiveness of the school is judged in relation to the values it adds to students in the way of knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes. Moreover, most of the decisions taken are on issues concerning them as a body (learners), therefore, they can be part of some, since it gives them the attainment of democratic principles. They can channel their grievances through the right route and enjoy immediate feedback.

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(Edited by Nicole and Sunny)